

APPENDIX VIII

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113

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114

those days he tended perhaps to give more credence to the reports of his subordinates, to accept more readily the denials of villagers, and to generalize more frequently than he would to-day.

Yet these are but toys; the massive structure stands and will mark an epoch in the development of anthropological research in middle India. Burma and Assam, which have given us many good monographs are, for ethnographical purposes, largely separate from the rest of the sub-continent. *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*¹ is the first Indian book in the new manner which reaches modern standards of enquiry and documentation, which can compare with publications on America and the Pacific. It is not, of course, all due to Grigson, but it is an instructive exercise to examine the books on peninsular India published before 1938 and those that have appeared since.

No one has known and explored Bastar as Grigson has, and his real book is written on the face of the countryside he loved so completely. He started a tradition in Bastar and still to-day there is peace, freedom and happiness in hundreds of villages as a result of the principles he established. A whole legend has grown up round the name of 'Grikson Diwan', for if Grigson loved the Marias and Murias they certainly reciprocated his affection. It is rare for aboriginals to know, still less to remember, the names of administrators, yet I found in 1940 and the following years that Grigson's name was known in the remotest villages of the State, and old men who had no idea that there was a war believed that somewhere or other Grikson Diwan was caring for their interests. At the top of the beautiful Raughat the villagers will show you a great rock from which, they say, Mr. and Mrs. Grigson, enraptured by the loveliness of the scene, once leapt fully clad into the waters of the pool far below. The Murias of Koilibera were still chuckling ten years afterwards at their recollections of Grigson's chase of a man-eater, when the Marias of the south whom he brought with him ate every monkey in the hills and stripped all the trees of the forest of red ants—Grigson himself being by no means backward in sharing the fantastic diet. In one high lonely clearing

[113]

¹ So far as I know, Mr. Grigson has published the following since *The Maria Gonds of Bastar: Reports—Notes on the Aboriginal Problem in the Mandla District* (Nagpur, 1940); *The Aboriginal Problem in the Balaghat District* (Nagpur, 1941); *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces and Berar* (Nagpur, 1944). Forewords—to C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Chenchus* (Bombay, 1943), to Verrier Elwin, *Maria Murder and Suicide* (Bombay, 1943), to C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Tribal Hyderabad* (Hyderabad, 1945). Translations of Maria Songs in *New Verse*, Feb.-March 1937. Review of Elwin, *The Baiga in Man*, Vol. XLI, p. 38. Letter on 'Cowrie Shells in the Central Provinces of India' in *Man*, Vol. XL, p. 139. Note on 'Human Sacrifice in Hyderabad' in *Man in India*, Vol. XXV, p. 68. *The Aboriginal in the Future India* (London, Royal Anthropological Institute, 1945); Presidential Address, Deccan History Association (Hyderabad, 1945).

SUPPLEMENT

355

of the Abujhmar, I was told, Grigson once encountered an ancient woman completely naked. She had never seen a white face before and, believing the visitor to be a Rakshasa, fell at his feet begging to be allowed to go for a few moments to her village to bid farewell to her little grandson, after which she would return to be devoured.

There is no end to these stories, many of them tales of generosity and kindness that would embarrass Grigson to have repeated. The result has been that Bastar is a very pleasant place to tour in. I have had trouble enough in Provinces and States, where there has been no one like Grigson to precede me, to realize vividly the difference that he has made. He is not the only one; Bastar has long been fortunate in her officers; but he set the pace.

When it was decided to issue an Indian edition of this book and Grigson asked me to write a sort of Comment to go with it, I was puzzled to know what to put in. I have done a certain amount of writing¹ about Bastar and the Bison-horn Marias, among whom I spent a good deal of time, and I did not want to repeat here what I had already written. In the end, at the risk of being very scrappy, I decided to give all my unpublished notes on the Marias, rather on the principle of the Abbot's order at the sack of Beziers: 'Kill them all; God will know his own.'

I deal first, therefore, with a few larger subjects, where my material supplements Grigson's, such as magic and the tragedies to which its practice leads, Bison-horn Maria ideas and taboos with regard to menstruation, pregnancy and birth, the dormitory and funerary customs. It seemed worth while to describe in some detail a marriage ceremony and the Ghotpal Marhai which I had witnessed personally. After that I proceed to give brief notes on points in the book which appear to need amplification. Short of reprinting a large amount of already published material, I do not know what other plan was possible.

II

Do the Marias believe in a Supreme Being? Grigson was not able to assemble any very definite evidence on this point. 'Only around Orcha', he says, 'and a few neighbouring Chhota

¹ For convenience of reference I shall give a list of my publications on Bastar and the Marias or Marias. 'Ceremonial Cross-Dressing among the Marias of Bastar State', *Man in India*, Vol. XXII, p. 163; 'Suicide among the Aborigines of Bastar State', *Man in India*, Vol. XXII, p. 207; 'The Use of Cowries in Bastar State', *Man*, Vol. XLII, p. 121; 'The Sago Palm in Bastar State', *J.R.A.S. Bom.*, Vol. XVIII, p. 69; 'Folklore of the Bastar Clan-Gods', *Man*, Vol. XLIII, p. 97; *Maria Murder and Suicide* (Bombay, 1943); 'Stilt-Walking among the Marias of Bastar State', *Man*, Vol. XLIV, p. 38; *Folk-Tales of Mahabeshal* (Bombay, 1944); *The Marias and their Ghosts* (Bombay, 1947); 'Funerary Customs in Bastar State', *Man in India*, Vol. XXV.

776

Dongar Pargana Hill Maria villages did I find any idea of a vague Supreme Being, Ispural, who would perhaps punish evil-doers somewhere after death; but no one could say who or where Ispural was, or where the sinful would be judged and punished. It is possibly a faint echo of missionary teaching passed on by bazaar gossip. Koppers, who is perhaps a little too obviously anxious to discover belief in a Supreme Deity everywhere for the demands of strict science, protests at this vagueness. 'In the light of the many facts known to-day', he says, 'this effort at explanation is not satisfactory. Apart from other difficulties it seems more than improbable that aborigines would in such a case quickly and easily find a new word to express a meaning which (according to Grigson's assumption) would be foreign to their mental vocabulary. The word Ispural appears to be genuinely Dravidian.' But Grigson could hardly be expected to improve on his evidence, and actually nothing is more characteristic of the aboriginal ecstasies than their invention of new words. I too have heard vague references to Ispural—far away from Chhota Dongar in the east of Kondagaon as well as in the Jhoria foothills. In a Muria song, Ispural is described as having daughters, the youngest of whom is Phulsundri Rani. In a Burkal Pata, a song used when a man has been killed by a tiger, Ispural appears as one of many gods who is accused of having caused the tragedy. Among the Bondos of Jeypore (who do not speak a Dravidian language), I found Ispur as the name of a sky god who is invoked at the time of winnowing the grain if there is no wind to blow away the chaff. This, and the fact that he has daughters, suggests that Ispural is a variant of Indra or Indal, a sky god who sends the rain and whose daughters often visit the earth. The actual word 'Ispural' may have been born in trance. A wizard hears the names Ishwar, Indal, Purub (Lord); they sink into his mind and are forgotten; then one day as he is raving in trance a new word comes into his head, and a new god is made.

But although Ispural is only doubtfully a name of the Supreme Being, the evidence appears to me overwhelming that all the aborigines of central India and Orissa believe in some sort of Creator or Supreme Deity. Some of them, identifying him with the Sun, call him by a special tribal name and very generally they use the honorific terms Bhagavan or Mahapurub³ and their dialectical variants. The most convincing proof that this belief is not a

² W. Koppers, 'Bhagwan, the Supreme Deity of the Bhils', *Antropos*, Tome XXXV and XXXVI, p. 307.

³ Bhagavan is the classical Hindu term for the adorable object of *Bhakti* worship; Mahapurub or Mahaprabhu is a Sanskrit word meaning 'great master' and may be applied to any eminent person, human or divine; in Bengal it is specially used of Chaitanya.

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